

THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE ASSOCIATION OF
ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS
(Section of the Library Association)

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(Willesden Public Libraries)

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Contents

ANNOUNCEMENTS	Page 2
VALUATIONS	Page 3
NEW MEMBERS	Page 7
CHILDREN'S BOOKS OF 1935	Page 7
LIBRARY v. SCHOOL	Page 11
AN ASSISTANT'S DIARY	Page 14
"THE PROFESSIONAL JOURNAL TO BE"	Page 16
COUNCIL NOTES	Page 19
CORRESPONDENCE	Page 20
THE DIVISIONS	Page 21

The Library Assistant ANNOUNCEMENTS

MR. T. I. M. CLULOW has been nominated for the vacant post of editor of *THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT*. There were no other nominations, and Mr. Clulow is therefore elected. With this issue, the present editor says good-bye to all his readers and welcomes the new editor to his chair with the best wish he can give him: that is, that he has as pleasant and happy a time in it as he has had.

The Inaugural Meeting of the 41st session of the Section will take place in the Great Hall, University College, W.C.1, at 6.30 p.m. on Wednesday, 8th January, 1936. Mr. G. D. H. Cole has consented to address the meeting on *Academic and professional freedom in the modern world*, a subject which should prove both stimulating and provocative. Mr. F. Seymour Smith, the President of the Section, will be in the Chair. Members are reminded that the presentation to our late Secretary, Mr. Hilton Smith, will be made at this meeting.

The meeting on the 11th December at the Southwark Bridge Road Library proved very rewarding to those members who made the journey to that mysterious region called the Borough. We will not make our usual acid remarks on the small number present, since a ready excuse can be offered, in that examinations were proceeding. Mr. Holliday's paper deserved a better audience than it got, however, and will have one, we hope, in an early issue of *THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT*. We personally went to the meeting in fear of some scattered remarks on fines and the reservation of fiction, but Mr. Holliday is that rarity—a young librarian with an adult mind, and his preoccupations were not with childish things. A rather halting discussion was beaten into liveliness by the Chairman, Mr. F. Helliwell, Chief Librarian of Southwark, who showed great solicitude that the audience should not feel restraint. The meeting was followed by an inspection of the recently reconstructed Lending Library, during which some assistants amused themselves trying to discover exactly what variation of Dewey is in use at Southwark. Unfortunately, the reconstruction of the ground-floor is not yet completed, so we were denied an inspection of what we understand is to be the first public commercial library in London. The evening's proceedings closed with coffee and sandwiches at the invitation of the library staff. Since Mr. Austing had no inkling of this, we believe, when pro-

The Library Assistant

posing his vote of thanks, we should like to offer our thanks here to the Southwark staff for a most hospitable meeting.

The Dance held on 27th November at Chaucer House was an unqualified success, and we would take the opportunity of asking members to book 19th February, 1936, for our second Dance of the season. We don't really need more than we had last time for a happy party, but other members will be welcome.

LONDON AND HOME COUNTIES BRANCH

The next meeting of the Branch will take place on 29th January at 6.30 p.m., by permission of the President and Council, in the Lecture Hall of the Royal Geographical Society's Building, in Kensington Gore (Exhibition Road entrance). Mr. G. R. Crone, M.A., the Society's Librarian, will deliver an address on "Maps: their cataloguing and arrangement, with some remarks on their use." After the meeting, the Library and Museum will be open for inspection by members. The Museum contains interesting exhibits relating to travel and exploration, and early maps and atlases will be displayed. The meeting will be the first visit of librarians to this Society.

VALUATIONS

T. I. M. CLULOW

Croydon: The Interests of Readers—a report on and summary of particulars derived from a questionnaire issued to readers June to October 1935.

I AM driven to believe that the only really creative work being done to-day in librarianship is that of some members of the Graduate Library School of Chicago. I make this assertion on the strength of two books and an experience. The books are Professor Pierce Butler's *Introduction to library science*, and Waples and Tyler's *What people want to read about*; the experience, that of assessing Valuations.

From a batch of reports, lists, etc., which this month showed in general a gratifying improvement in appearance, I chose this from Croydon for pride of place because of the unusual nature of its subject-matter. (Physically, it is a model of cyclostyling, such as is too rarely seen in library productions.) And

The Library Assistant

I had in mind to apply to it no more than a normal critical attention. But I soon found I could not leave it at that. Mr. Sayers circulated a questionnaire asking for readers' preferences in main subjects and subsidiary topics. The signing of the forms was optional, yet only 557 (signed and unsigned) were received, though Croydon has 54,000 registered adult readers. This is Mr. Sayers' comment: "The number, however, is sufficient to show how wide and many are the interests for which the public library in a large town has to cater . . . !" Perhaps this is making the best of a bad job; but the truth is, that if this were all that the enquiry revealed, then it was surely a most expensive way of demonstrating a truism.

The experiment, in fact, failed in great degree because of the experimenters' ignorance of, or disregard of, previous research on the same lines. It did so because they could not rid themselves of the obsessing curse of current librarianship—its inability to regard its activity as an objective social phenomenon, its inability to be scientific, not subjective. This is not for lack of the will, but for lack of the temperament. Indeed, this last enquiry of Croydon comes nearer to what is needed than the earlier English experiments, such as the dilettante research mentioned in Leeds' last annual report, or the Derbyshire and East Ham enquiries into the reading of children. And these in turn are more valuable than the vapourings on the quality of current reading, the subjective, unsubstantiated theorizings in so many annual reports. But oh, Croydon, how much more might have been done had you considered Walter Hofmann's work in Germany, or Waples and Tyler's in America. For then you would have discovered that philosophy of method which is essential to the adequate development of librarianship as a social science.

I have said before that librarians anxious to secure the most effective publicity for their work might learn much from the great advertising agents. Advertising, from being a haphazard, hit-or-miss activity, has become a science by its development of Market Research, and some such road we must tread. At present, "unlike his colleagues in other fields of social activity, the librarian is strangely uninterested in the theoretical aspects of his profession." He is content to rationalize each technical process, but is fearful of any generalization that tends to a scientific philosophy of librarianship, distrusting its effect on the subjective values involved in its work with individual readers. And that is the error; the error that Croydon makes, the error that all our librarians make, in supposing that science has anything to do with individuals. Science (and the science of anything, even librarianship) has to do with groups and probabilities.

The Library Assistant

"Science has no concern with the unique, nor can it explore subjective emotional values." The humanistic qualities of librarianship will not lose one jot of their acknowledged value if a scientific technique is formulated to be their handservant.

The Croydon report itself provides me with support in this argument. An ancillary question asked readers to suggest subjects which they considered deficiently represented in the stock. The result is astonishing. Readers suggest again and again that this or that subject had no books, or few books, or no modern books; while the catalogues showed a number of books before 1930 and a reasonable number added since. This, in a library with possibly the most scientific technique of "process" in the country, requires much more explanation than is vouchsafed. Of course it demonstrates the irrational aversion to using the catalogues that is characteristic of our general public. But does it not suggest also that progress in the direction of elaborate mechanical aids is a delusion? That our scanty resources will be better employed in seeking a scientific approach to the question? "A bibliographer invariably knows exactly how to do his work, but only too often he has little clear understanding of why he is doing it."

Librarianship is the Cinderella of the social sciences, because we tamely acquiesce in a static technique, and so it will remain until we establish in its stead a dynamic technique based upon a scientific philosophy. Professor Butler's *Introduction to library science* (to which I owe much in the foregoing) is an admirable sketch of this new approach to librarianship, and should be known by every librarian in the land.

Lists from: Sheffield, Burnley, Coventry, Hastings.

One of the lists from Sheffield is a publication of the Education Committee giving details of lectures in the city, 1935-6, with particulars of the various societies and their activities. The section devoted to the Public Libraries rightly proclaims that "the best catalogue is the staff," though not every library I know could safely make the claim. They wisely choose to give an annotated list of twenty outstanding books as a sample of the fare they have to offer. (I notice that the *Coventry bookshelf* is now picking a dozen or so books from its list and giving them a more friendly introduction than the general list provides.) Burnley sends a very good leaflet on *The Theatre and play production*, which is well printed, but a little staid in lay-out. Sheffield's list on *Mark Twain* I liked for

The Library Assistant

the conceit of its stars and stripes, while Hastings' *Music and musicians* is an excellent little booklet which should receive more notice were I competent to appraise its contents. Receiving a list on Local Government from both Sheffield and Coventry, interesting comparisons were possible. Sheffield is more selective, and I was sorry to see no mention of Le Corbusier's *City of to-morrow* or the Webbs' classic work. The latter may have been deliberate, however, as I can find nothing on Local Government History. Coventry has the disadvantage of possessing earlier editions in a few cases. It is amusing to speculate on the disparities in the Town Planning and Slum Clearance sections: Coventry lists twice as many books as Sheffield! Perhaps the most interesting fact that emerges is that over seventy books appear in both lists, surely a strong argument for the extension of co-operative production of these bulletins.

Bulletins: Croydon, Dagenham, Lowestoft, Nottingham.

The *Reader's index* has lost its old cover, and donned a most attractive new one. In an effort to subdue the plaint that the books wanted are always out, Croydon offers a special bespoke card for one halfpenny "to cover the cost of the card." As the normal fee is twopence, I can't help wondering if the margin is a legitimate profit in a public institution. After all, the bespeaking system is merely a dodge to save either buying a superfluous duplicate or disappointing a borrower, and to avoid discrimination should be run at cost. Dagenham and Lowestoft both send leaflets of the type that Finchley first produced, I think. They are very attractive and handier than the normal bulletin, and permit the inclusion of books closer to their appearance. Lowestoft also adds a list of novelists of a specific type of story. This I can say from experience is a boon to staff as well as public, in a small library at any rate. I am not quite certain whether Nottingham's *Book-list* has appeared in an entirely fresh form, though I suspect so. Like most of the material this month, it is well produced, and contains some good lists of the year's books. It is difficult to criticize a selection for omissions, but it is surely a little late to be adding Lorna Rea's *Six Mrs. Greenes*.

The Library Assistant

NEW MEMBERS

CENTRAL.—Edward A. Brown (Greenwich); J. B. Chauduri (19, King Henry's Road, N.W.3); Sybil P. Foster, Norah Goom (Surbiton); Thomas D. Goodman (National Central Library); J. R. Pain (Leyton); David L. Stokes (Paddington); R. E. Carpenter, W. S. Hudson, Herbert Willsher (St. Pancras).

CHILDREN'S BOOKS OF 1935

MARGARET WATT-SMITH

Andersen, Lis, *Lis sails the Atlantic* (Routledge, 5s.). Blyton, E., *The Children's garden* (Newnes, 5s.). Bourne, J., *More new plays for boys* (Dickson, 2s. 6d.). De Brunhoff, J., *Babar's travels* (Methuen, 7s. 6d.). Disney, Walt., *Silly symphony omnibus* (Bodley Head, 3s. 6d.). Ditmars, R. L., *Book of zoography* (Harrap, 5s.). Doust, L. A., *Manual of simple perspective* (Warne, 3s. 6d.). Durian, W., *Bill of the black hand* (Cape, 5s.). Gibbons, S., *The Untidy gnome* (Longmans, 7s. 6d.). Hutchinson's *1,001 wonderful things* (Hutchinson, 3s. 6d.). Kastner, E., *Emil and the three twins* (Cape, 7s. 6d.). Kiernan, J. H., *Lawrence of Arabia* (Harrap, 3s. 6d.). Lewis, E. F., *Ho-Ming* (Harrap, 6s.). Lynch, P., *Turf-cutter's donkey goes visiting* (Dent, 5s.). Michaelis, K., *The Green island* (Allen, 7s. 6d.). Patten, M., *Turf-fire tales* (Macmillan, 6s.). Peary, M. A., *Snow baby* (Routledge, 6s.). Pollard, A., *Boy's romance of aviation* (Harrap, 7s. 6d.). Rae, G., *Mary Plain in town* (Sanderson, 3s. 6d.). Taylor, M., *Knight of the air* (Blackwell, 3s. 6d.). Thirkell, A., *The Grateful sparrow* (Hamilton, 5s.). Turnbull, E., *Happy voyage* (Nelson, 5s.). Van Loon, H., *Ships and sea-faring* (Harrap, 10s. 6d.). Way, R. B., *Railway engines* (Cassell, 3s. 6d.).

HOW much easier it is to eulogize over the one and to forget the ninety-and-nine. Grateful, in past years, for two or three outstanding publications, I have been obliged to close my eyes to the numbers of books that were uninspired and, in many cases, useless. But they are improving. Some publishers have realized that each book for children should satisfy a particular demand, and the output of indeterminate books is decreasing. Without wishing to subscribe to the American theory that every book should be graded, generally speaking I think that a book should be either practical or imaginative; the child mind should be stimulated and instructed, not merely doped. This year has produced books that fill the gaps in our non-fiction stocks, and a few intelligent stories. The success of *Alice* and the Milne books encouraged imitations that appealed more to the adult with a sentimentality

The Library Assistant

about children than to the children themselves; the librarian requires books that will satisfy children's demands and encourage them to develop towards mature taste and thought. More attention has been paid to the format, illustrations this year are particularly satisfying, and although most of the books are the price of an adult novel, it is easy to point out that the number of illustrations makes the cost of production of a child's book infinitely greater than that of a novel. Sooner or later the embargo of "not more than five shillings for juveniles" will have to be raised.

But enough of theorizing. We must see what there is to buy before haggling over the purchase price.

I find it hard to decide pride of place this year, but the younger children have been very well served. Here comes Babar again in *Babar's travels*, just as large as ever, I'm afraid; but who could squash an elephant into an ordinary octavo volume? His adventures on his honeymoon with Celeste, incredible as they seem, are undertaken with the dignity and polish expected from his French creator. Shipwrecked, working a circus, he returns to his country in time to win a war with a strategy that I recommend to Signor Mussolini. The illustrations which form the major part of this book are even bolder in colour than last year. Another picture book which will never lie desolate on the shelves is the *Walt Disney omnibus*, which needs no recommendation to those who have sat three hours waiting for his antics on the screen. Two fairy tales have come from the pens of adult authors. Is the current belief that writing for children does not pay really true? Angela Thirkell has collected some tales from the German, illustrated by Ludwig Richter in a manner reminiscent of the lovely Kate Greenaway period, making the *Grateful sparrow* a charming publication. Still in the German vein is *The Untidy gnome* who keeps watch over Gerda of the flaxen plaits and snub nose when she has been abducted by the Tree Elves.

Many of the popular stories of last year have sequels. Among them is the *Turf-cutter's donkey goes visiting*, which should be as popular as the one last year. When a toy elephant misses the last delivery by Santa Claus he is in danger of relegation to the scrap-heap for last year's toys; for this story alone *Turf-fire tales* will be bought for the nine-year-olds. Animals that speak like children I find irritating, but will always make an exception in favour of *Mary Plain in town*, a most incredible bear, who is more popular than I expected. At last we can drop the grumble that there are never enough books for the youngest borrowers.

As usual, I can find only one outstanding book written for girls this year. Why, I don't know. *Ho-Ming*, sister volume to the successful *Young Fu* of last

The Library Assistant

year, is the most intelligent girl's book written for some time. Emancipation of Chinese women is of recent origin, yet Ho-Ming struggled to evade bound feet and to attend the village school, ultimately becoming a nurse. She has charm and personality, and is the only character created for girls in recent years; making us realize what sawdust puppets the average girls in fiction are: painted masks and trails of sawdust.

For the boy who loves Swiss Family Robinson there is Karen Michaelis' *Green Island*. Improbable, of course, but work of ingenuity and imagination. A Scandinavian island, cut off from the mainland in a night, has to rely on its own resources and ultimately on the ingenuity of one small boy, Torbin. Miss Michaelis carefully sugar-coats an economic lesson in the relative values of staple commodities and the interdependence of communities once their outside communications have been destroyed. Two years have elapsed since *Emil and the detectives* had its great success; I think Mr. Kastner will not achieve such wide sales with *Emil and the three twins*. Sequels can be so disappointing. The other book from the house of Cape is unsatisfactory. Were it not for its august imprint I should rank *Bill of the black hand* little higher than many a story published in the twopenny weeklies. Two more books in the Tales of Action series, of which *Knight of the Air* will be the more popular. It is three years since I pleaded for more modern adventure stories, and this is the first time I have been able to secure a fair number of air stories.

Now for the non-fiction. Many librarians have loosened the bonds of their classification, some refusing to make any distinction between fiction and non-fiction, and on considering some of the books this year I think they are wise. We buy an attractive book and hide it away under a long number in the middle of a Dewey class, when if the non-fiction percentages were not quite such a bogey we would probably call it fiction, knowing that as such it would be more widely read. Three books support this theory. *Lis sails the Atlantic*, the travels of a middle-class family who leave security to find adventure in a sailing-boat. Someone may have guided the hand of the youthful authoress, but it makes attractive reading. Another girl found adventure in the Arctic when her father was on an expedition to the North Pole; Marie Peary gives the story of the days when she and her mother lived for months in Greenland in the book *Snow baby*. The third argument for non-classification is *Happy voyage* with the Condon family, seeing the Suez Canal and the rest of the world from the deck of an ocean liner. Letters from the travellers and a profusion of first-class illustrations create this book's unusual flavour. Now were it not for the

The Library Assistant

stranglehold of classification I could shelve these books under Girl's adventure, and use them for an antidote to so many school stories; as it is they cohabit with the Peeps series, much to their detriment.

As a relief to the agonies of those female assistants who can just recognize an engine from a tender, here is a volume on *Railway engines* which will answer most questions, from the "Rocket" to the new stream-lined fliers, complete with, to boys, very simple diagrams on construction. Then the *Book of Aeroplanes* offers similar relief on the question of air travel; from Bleriot to Mildenhall. Complete the picture with Van Loon's *Ships and how they sailed the seven seas*, an exhaustive study of ships, from galleys to ocean greyhounds, with notes on tea-clippers, intelligible to the aforementioned female, and she will face all small boys with equanimity. All mechanical books have an amazing issue, and these three are among the best of their kind.

The rest of the list is unrelated, but I claim that all the books will supply a demand in the library, and in some cases fill a bad gap. *More simple science* continues Huxley's work, and introduces the child to fossils, eugenics, and climates, and throws in a short history of the outstanding developments of modern science. Many books were hurried from the presses to meet the demand for lives of Lawrence, but Kiernan's *Lawrence of Arabia* was finished before such a demand arose. This book gives a good picture of contemporary events, and is not afraid to point out the failure of Lawrence's hopes for Arabia.

The Children's garden is a complete guide for the child who is struggling to make one end of the potato patch burst into blossom. It gives good instructions for the rearing of the more common yet most decorative flowers, and does not expect the young horticulturist to be over-endowed with pocket-money. *Simple perspective* will explain the problem of those disappearing tram-lines and line up with Doust's former guides for the young artist. Never again will I vaguely confuse the Jereboa with a Biblical personage; so much at least the delightful *Book of zoography* taught me. Maps showing all the main fauna of different countries will give geography a new meaning for most children.

I have had more demand for simple plays than ever this season. Each school and club has burst suddenly into dramatic art, and expected the library to supply its demand. Fortunately, there have been more volumes of plays published, and the best of the bunch, though they are all good, is John Bourne's *More new plays for boys and girls*. It provides an alternative to the fairy or historical play.

For those who want a lot for their money, this year's prize for value goes to

The Library Assistant

Hutchinsons for the cheapest reference book I have seen. 1,001 *wonderful things* is exactly the kind of encyclopædia which the children read in the odd minutes after they have chosen their book. The paper is not good enough, but can we grumble when the price is only three-and-sixpence?



LIBRARY v. SCHOOL

R. STAVELEY

I THINK it probable that much of the perplexity and indecision from which many librarians seem to suffer is due to the fact that, while they are willing to devote so much thought to the individual problems with which they are faced, they give so little to their root causes. A thoughtful and direct policy can only be pursued when these problems are seen as a whole and recognized as obvious symptoms of a less obvious malady. We rightly deplore, for example, the low standard of reading generally, the preference for trashy fiction, and the well-known aversion of most of our readers to books which demand or stimulate mental effort. Worse still, we know that, despite our bright poster work, our attractive bulletins, the greater interior comfort and convenience of our modern libraries, and the increasing efficiency of our systems, the greater part of the public remains contentedly indifferent to our service. Where is the common denominator in these and many other problems? At whose door do these faults lie? If we ignore these questions we almost inevitably pander to the faults in our book selection rather than try to cure them. It may be we admit our responsibility for them too readily, and attribute it too thoughtlessly to the inadequacy and inefficiency of our systems in older poverty-stricken days. Quite possibly we are the victims of circumstances we have never controlled.

In my view, at any rate, most of the responsibility must be handed over to the educationalist. It would have seemed incredible that, after well-nigh a century of compulsory education, our elementary and secondary schools—I say nothing of the universities—could have failed to produce an intelligent reading public, or even a public in which intelligent readers predominate. It is illuminating to seek the causes of this phenomenon and to consider their implications for the public library.

The most obvious failing of the educational system lies in the fact that the average boy leaves school with a definite dislike for learning in general and

The Library Assistant

purposive reading in particular. Pushing aside his Milton and Golden Treasury, his leisure hours see him sunk into happy oblivion in the pages of innumerable wood-pulp magazines. There is surely little to wonder at in the fact, for after years devoted to the frenzied and painful assimilation of dry fact after dry fact, urged on by the fear of impending, all-important exams., years in which conventional and traditional opinions and evaluations are packed into his mind to be reproduced word for word at exam. time, the student is rare who escapes from this mass-education machine with an unimpaired reasoning faculty and a live intelligence. It is not surprising that the librarian's appeal for intelligent self-development through his books finds little response from a generation that has been through this thought-destroying, individuality-subduing process. The educationalist's dream of a Utopia freed from the gloomy oppression of illiteracy has not been brought appreciably nearer by his examination fetish.

But even more important, from the librarian's point of view, than the school-leaver's aversion to decent books, is the inevitable subjugation or complete destruction of the all-important critical faculty. This makes more or less permanent what would otherwise be only a temporary disregard of conscious self-development. It is the same unreasoning, uncritical, mental attitude that makes the advertiser's mass attacks on the public pocket so profitable and the librarian's appeal so profitless. When educationalists in conference cease their search for the magic, curricula-adjusting formula which shall mass-produce educated school-leavers annually, to realize that true education, like true culture, means a carefully formed critical, appreciative attitude to facts rather than their wholesale assimilation, the public library must undoubtedly feel the benefit.

I believe I have touched briefly two of the most pernicious features of the present school system, features against which the thinking librarian must oppose a definite corrective policy. It is difficult to define such a policy, and impossible to do it justice in so short an article, but it must obviously be energetic and consistent, avoiding the educationalist's mistake of confusing restlessness with effectiveness. I content myself with pointing out what must clearly be its most important feature, a zealous proselytization among the un-library-conscious majority. I believe they can best be approached through the innumerable little clubs, recreational as well as serious and vocational, into which every urban population drifts. At present we confine ourselves illogically to the handful of local "cultural" and "literary" societies whose members

The Library Assistant

are already aware of our usefulness, yet I am convinced that an annual combing out of these multifarious little societies by the librarian and a willing team of the brighter lights of his staff would be immensely beneficial to his service. I presuppose, I know, an adequate and willing staff, but I believe an attitude of friendly co-operation between the chief and his staff, whereby the former is willing to allow occasional time off and the latter to do occasional off-duty work, would do much to help.

I would like to see each department doing its share in this "outside" work. Why should not the librarian of the commercial library, for example, with his senior assistant helping, armed with both a list of the local factory clubs and guilds and the permission and co-operation of the employers, systematically comb the works, introducing to the workers both his own department and the lending library? He would find a useful opening, too, in supplementing the private training work usual in the larger works. He will always aim at giving informal talks as often as time will allow. I would like to see keen and competent assistants doing the same with all the numerous parochial guilds, scouts, guides, dramatic, musical, debating, philatelic, and all other such societies which absorb so great a proportion of school-leavers. I suggest the librarian should consider it his duty to undertake some, at any rate, of this work, in addition to co-operating as before in the usual programme of adult education sponsored by the formal education authorities.

It is when this preliminary work is done, however, and the contact established, that the most difficult part begins; the stirring up in the members of each society of some sort of interest in the library. A considerable amount of tact is required in pointing out to non-borrowing hearers what they are missing, without giving the feeling that they are being talked down to. Obviously the best person to talk to any society is one who is genuinely interested in its purpose, be it dramatic, photographic, or what not, and can through this pass on an infectious enthusiasm for books in general. A single visit would naturally not produce any spectacular results, but a definite and profitable connexion between the society and the library could be established in this way. Extend the work as far as the library resources of staff will allow and I believe a consistent and increasing harvest of issues would be the reward.

I repeat that this is only one of many features of our policy, besides which many others will suggest themselves to the astute librarian. The guiding principle behind them all should be that the whole policy is a definite work of reparation, a mass inducement to re-think a school-acquired attitude to books,

The Library Assistant

an appeal to the common sense to use them as necessary but fascinating tools, and I am certain that in pursuing this policy the library will find its true vocation and only real justification.



AN ASSISTANT'S DIARY

"SCRIPTOR"

22nd November.—Have a few more remarks to make about items from correspondence. Must thank one who signs himself (or herself, probably the latter) "Cogitator" for remarks concerning my suggestions for using films in advertising. Thinks rather that such advertisement should be "seductive" and not "dogmatic." Pleases me little which kind is better, so long as something may perhaps be done.

Must also mention that several correspondents have invited my views on the proposed amalgamation, and it is significant perhaps that each one feels particularly that the brightness of the ASSISTANT would be entirely lost in the L.A.R. As one put it, "Heaven help us if we . . . lose the ASSISTANT, and have only the L.A.R. to read, or rather, I think, to *study*." Think myself that amalgamation has got to come, though some of us may dislike the thought of it, and that it must ultimately be for the good of the profession. I hasten to add my prayers to those who desire to see some of the ASSISTANT's brightness in the RECORD. But, really, is it essential to lose the ASSISTANT on amalgamation? Isn't there room for two periodicals in one profession?

25th November.—Borrower this afternoon handed in a book on pacifism, and so fell to talk thereon. How glad was I that this was a subject I did know a great deal of. And so thought afterwards how advantageous for an assistant to be able always to say something intelligent about anything borrowers may say. Sounds, I know, in such wide terms, an impossibility, but have found that, after more than ten years of life with books on all subjects, making intelligent glances at them, and reading one's newspaper carefully, 'tis not so impossible a thing as one imagines at the beginning. It is, at any rate, an asset that should be cultivated by us, perhaps much more.

2nd December.—Whenever we write December for the first time, we think immediately of Christmas and a slack month, as regards issues, at any rate. And it is indeed a relief to have this break in the heavier winter months. Suppose these remarks hold good for most libraries. The reasons for them should be universal.

The Library Assistant

4th December.—ASSISTANT arrived this morning, and was flattered to find that I am the subject of a full-blooded letter to Mr. Editor himself. Do not think it necessary to reply much here to Mr. Yeates, but would ask him to look at my entry for 16th November. Perhaps he has done so already, and asked himself whether my correspondent on this subject of the messenger is right or not. Am well aware that there are two sides to this question, and one must be very careful to treat individual cases on their merits. But think a good general rule is to nip in the bud any case that savours of laziness or disinterestedness. Nip it gently, I mean, not in any harsh or abrupt manner. No, Mr. Yeates, I am not so unobliging an assistant as you suggest, but unfortunately most of the remarks you make about our library happen to be true, and we poor assistants have no say in the matter.

7th December.—Borrower returned book this morning with one leaf having a tear across the centre and a small piece missing. When taxed with the matter, said that it was like it when he had it. Quite a new book, unfortunately, but had been out about half-a-dozen times. Pointed out that each book is glanced through before shelving each time, and would surely have been noticed if it was done before. But, as he pointed out, it could easily have been missed. Tried gently, but firmly, to ascertain if he had been guilty or not, but had to admit that it could not be proved to him. So had to leave matter there; and what else can be done in like case? If borrower decides to say nay to any damage, nothing ever can be proved, can it?

8th December, Lord's Day.—Yes, but chose the opportunity to peruse my ASSISTANT further, and discovered that a certain Miss McGill has been reading a paper at Colne on "Library publicity," and sounds dangerously as though she has deliberately taken ideas from the Diary, and not so much as a mention of it. But must not be so uncharitable on this day. Perhaps she has never so much as heard of it. And even so, who should I be, to think that these ideas should be original to me? Cannot resist requoting one of her sentences. "We don't like," she says, "the thought of advertising, but advertise we must, and advertising we shall be in a few years, unless we want to fall behind completely." That's the stuff, Miss McGill! I should like to meet you.

11th December.—Felt this night the effect of what I wrote for the 2nd inst. Counter-work so slack that I was able, for the first time for many weeks, to devote some of the evening to office work. So now expect to get still slacker and slacker up till Christmas.

12th December.—Enjoyed much, before retiring to my well-earned rest, "the

The Library Assistant

second Epistle to the Britannians," otherwise known to Mr. Editor as the American Letter, and should like to point to two items therein. "The younger librarians," he says, "should have every opportunity for self-expression and professional development through broad and active participation in the affairs of the profession, both local and national." Seems to me to have some bearing on our amalgamation proposals. Might help us all to read very thoughtfully the first half of this letter, if not all of it. The other thing is the second point of the third paragraph of the "Objectives," dealing with the "integration of library service and teaching." Brought back to mind, in one of my first correspondence courses for an L.A. exam., learning that the greater advance of library service and technique in America was very largely due to the recognition of the fact that libraries and education were practically one and the same thing. But if *they* still feel the need of more integration in this respect, it seems as though *we* have not even begun yet.



"THE PROFESSIONAL JOURNAL TO BE"

K. C. HARRISON

WHEN the amalgamation of the A.A.L. with the L.A. is completed, one of the most interesting developments will be the cessation of the present two official journals and the substitution of a new and comprehensive one. The end of the galloping, often impudent, and always vivacious career of THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT will surely be viewed with general regret, and such a lamentable occasion seems to offer a first-class opportunity for some budding librarian poet to compose a memorable dirge. The occasion offers a more important opportunity, however, for the Library Association, whose very existence is based on the printed word, to produce a publication unique in the world of professional journals, a sphere in which, after all, the Association should be in the van. The following notes, it is stressed, are mere personal suggestions, but the writer would like to think that they also embody the desires of a great many members in regard to their future professional journal.

The first necessity is a new title. I have no suggestions at all to make here, and indeed my deepest sympathies are due to the person or persons whose unenviable lot it will be to think of an appropriate title. A sudden inspiration in this respect would certainly earn our everlasting thanks. Another alteration

The Library Assistant

might be the scrapping of that hideous sea-green colour which greets us each month on the cover of the RECORD. Whatever colour be adopted in its place, it ought to be a full, rich, well-defined shade. So many magazines to-day possess covers which are not so much coloured as merely tinted, and instead of being assertive these covers display what might be called apologies for colours. In addition to this suggested change of colour, I also look forward with relish to the disappearance of the contents table from the cover of the RECORD.

Taking everything into consideration, the L.A.'s present journal is satisfying in paper, type, and lay-out, although the use of such shiny paper is hardly setting a good example. As for printing, much as one would like to see our professional journal set in Gill Sans, this would not be policy if, as one expects, the future magazine is to be a substantial one, as it cannot be disputed that Gill Sans, *en masse*, becomes monotonous and troubling to the eye. Then there are illustrations to consider, the absence of which has always been one of the few drawbacks of the journal you are now reading, while it is only recently that the RECORD has featured regular illustrations. At the risk of revealing myself as a misinformed man, I must say that I have always believed librarianship to be a practical subject, and to-day more than ever practical subjects need the help of the illustrative art. I shall look to the new publication to provide, not only interior and exterior views of contemporary examples of library architecture, but also more frequent illustrations of new library gadgets, furniture, and the like. It is a shame, too, that a librarian must needs die before he can have his portrait in the official journal, and it would be better if the appointments' and retirements' jottings could be supplemented by portraits of the eminent librarians mentioned. (On second thoughts, it might be necessary to add the injunction that only the good-looking ones need apply for this distinction.)

Now we are arrived at the actual matter of the proposed journal. Much publicity has already been given to the fact that it is to combine the best features of the existing magazines, but we are still quite in the dark as to what these features will be. "Valuations" should certainly be one of these, and it should be conducted in the same breezy and stimulating vein that has made it one of the most eagerly awaited contributions of THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT. Student members will almost certainly expect a students' section, in which matter pertaining to the professional examinations and the correspondence courses could be set out. Room should also be provided here for articles by student members themselves, while an additional attraction for this section

The Library Assistant

might be the inclusion of "advice" articles by tutors. I have no doubt whatever that they could provide contributions of an eye-opening nature on the courses and their students.

The RECORD's "Notes and News" and "Municipal Library Notes" should be retained, both under fresh captions, and the county library material should come under THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT's "What the Counties are doing" rather than under "County Library Notes." Then there will be the indispensable professional articles, an abundance of them, I hope, in which both the sagacity of Experience and the audacity of Youth will be amply represented. THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT has in the past benefited greatly by the fresh daring of Youth, and it would be a pity if the dignified dimensions of the new journal should, through overawe, muzzle valuable ideas. The policy of the future journal with regard to its articles should be essentially professional and practical rather than literary or academic. In spite of myself, I should like to make one exception. This is, that the articles on the year's best books which have been a feature of successive January numbers of THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT must not be allowed to peter out. If possible the same inspired and competent writers should be retained with them. For the librarian of the small library, such writings have been a help in book selection, but apart from this it is always interesting to read what fellow librarians think about the year's literature.

All this, then, is what I should like to see in a librarians' journal, an activity the importance of which cannot be overrated. It affords valuable exchange of views, it makes public the latest practical developments, and it acquaints subscribers with the original thought of many of the best brains in the profession. Apart from this one must remember that, despite the active work of the branches, there is always the assistant who rarely has the chance to attend meetings and to whom membership of the Association means only the doubtful privilege of being allowed to sit for examinations, and the receipt of a journal every month. To this person the journal means much, and he has a right to expect a great deal from it. At this juncture in its history, the Library Association has an unprecedented chance to produce a professional journal worthy of the name. Let good use be made of the opportunity.

COUNCIL NOTES

THE 8th Council Meeting of the year was held at Chaucer House on 20th November, 1935. The meeting began with a debate on the result of the Amalgamation Ballot, in which it was decided that the results of the ballot should not be disclosed, and a further course of action decided on as reported in THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT for December. For the Programme Committee it was reported that the Annual Meeting should be held in London on 8th April, 1936. For the Publications Committee a report was given on the position of Recommended Books, and it was decided that publication be continued for 1936. The Editor reported publication of the Grammar of Classification, and delay of publication of additions to the library catalogue, since not enough matter was in hand. Subjects at A.A.L. sessions at the Margate Conference were decided as follows: Tuesday, 9th June—*The Training of library staffs*; Wednesday, 10th June—*What we do and why*: five ten-minute papers on unusual technical practices; Thursday, 11th June—*Library work with children*. The speaker for this meeting to be selected by the Circle of Library Workers among Children. It was resolved that A.A.L. representatives on the L.A. Council for 1936 should be the President and the Hon. Treasurer. In reply to a resolution by the Yorkshire Division, it was stated that, with regard to certain clauses in the Amalgamation proposals, an exploration was proceeding of exact sums expended by branches, divisions and sections of the L.A. on travelling expenses. This information was acceptable to the Yorkshire representative, and further consideration was deferred. This terminated the formal business of the meeting, and the Chairman expressed warm appreciation of the services rendered by members who are retiring from the Council—Messrs. Firth, Jackson, Pearson, and Sergeant. The Hon. Secretary pointed out that the Chairman was also terminating a period of valuable service, and moved that an appreciation of Mr. Hayward's services be recorded on the Minutes. This was carried with applause.

The Library Assistant CORRESPONDENCE

SHOREDITCH CENTRAL LIBRARY,
PITFIELD ST., N.1.
5th December, 1935.

TO THE EDITOR,
THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT.
SIR,—

My attention has been drawn to an error in my article on the Book Exhibition appearing in December's issue.

On page 258, line 13, I mention the five-shilling leather bindings of Cape's, and state that these are quarto size. I expect many people have been wondering how a book of such proportions can be produced at such a cost. The answer, of course, is that they are not quarto, but octavo, the error being mine entirely, in haste,

Yours, etc.,
HUGH MORETON.

UPFIELD,
STROUD,
GLOS.
6th December, 1935.

THE EDITOR,
THE LIBRARY ASSISTANT.
DEAR SIR,—

I was very pleased to see that Mr. F. C. Tighe had broached the subject of examination in the November number of your excellent magazine, and that other writers kept it alive in the December number. I have good reason to believe that there is gloom and despondency in the junior ranks of library assistants, and a glance at the tables showing the very high percentage of failures among entrants for the Intermediate Examinations is more than sufficient to account for the juniors being disheartened.

Mr. J. H. Cable, in the December number, suggests a revision of the syllabus. I am in no position to support or controvert his suggestion, but the tables referred to above show, of themselves, that something is wrong somewhere. Maybe the standard exacted is too high; maybe there is undue harsh-

The Library Assistant

ness in marking the answers to the questions set: I do not know; and until one does know exactly what is wrong, it is rather futile to try to find the remedy.

Miss D. H. Harmer mentions the great help afforded by Librarianship classes, but for how many are these classes available? Only for those who are employed in or near Leeds or Birmingham and a dozen or so other big towns; not for the great mass of junior assistants who are scattered widely over the country in twos and threes and half-dozens. And correspondence classes are by no means always satisfactory—I could, if necessary, produce evidence to the point. There is a great deal more to be said on the subject at large, and I hope abler pens than mine will not allow the matter to drop. I will not trespass on your space further than to submit, with due deference, that the High Authorities of the L.A. should lose no time in giving the whole question their earnest and SYMPATHETIC consideration.

I am, Sir,

Yours truly,

W. F. STUART, *Colonel*.

*Chairman (for the past seven years) of the Stroud
Library Committee.*

THE DIVISIONS

LIVERPOOL AND DISTRICT BRANCH

SIXTY-THREE members were present at the first meeting of the Winter Session, held, by kind permission of the Chief Librarian, Mr. J. F. Smith, in the Reference Library, Liverpool, on Friday, 25th October.

The programme consisted of a symposium, entitled "The Intelligent assistant's guide to librarianship," the work of Mr. D. I. Colley, Mr. M. Edwards, Miss M. E. Eilbeck, Miss N. T. Hormell, Mr. J. C. Marl, and Miss F. R. Scott.

The discussion that ensued demonstrated, in no uncertain way, that their joint effort had proved itself an outstanding success.

At the conclusion of a very happy meeting, unanimous votes of thanks were passed to the Branch Social Committee for the excellent catering arrangements,

The Library Assistant

and to the six speakers, whose papers were still being heatedly discussed as we made our ways home towards the midnight hour.

NORTH-EAST DIVISION

A social evening (Whist Drive and Dance) has been arranged, and will be held, at the "Maisonette," Heaton Road, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, on Wednesday, 15th January. Tickets, 2s. 6d. each, can be obtained from Mr. R. Muris, Central Reference Library, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

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